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Jane E. Henney, M.D.
Commissioner
U. S. Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville MD 20857-0001

Dear Dr. Henney,

I am writing to give my support to the establishment of a federal reporting system to determine the quantity of antibiotics used in U.S. agriculture. As a scientist employed in the development of biopharmaceuticals I take a strong interest in pharmaceutical industry and have been concerned and even shocked at reports in the scientific literature concerning the rise in drug resistant microorganisms. I was particularly struck by a comment in a recent review that "Development of resistance is not a matter of if but only a matter of when" (Walsh, C. Molecular mechanisms that confer antibacterial drug resistance. *Nature* 406, 775-781 (2000)). The message of this paper (& several others in that *Nature* issue) was that antibacterials are difficult to find, easy to loose and that agricultural use may be a significant component in the evolution of resistance.

Given the evolutionary power of bacteria to develop immunity to therapeutic agents on the one hand and the enormous cost and difficulty of development of these agents on the other, I believe that the current antimicrobial compounds represent an almost priceless asset to all humans that must be conserved for as long as possible. It is therefore critical that we at least know which and how much of these therapeutics are used in agriculture so that a rational strategy for their use can be developed to protect the efficacy of current antibiotics for the treatment of human disease.

As an active scientist I am very saddened to think that the life's work of my colleagues in the antimicrobial field may be destroyed by the profligate use of antibiotics for the short term economic gain of a few. I once again urge the establishment of a reporting system that will at least enable us to understand the quantities & types of agents in agricultural use.

Yours faithfully,



Richard Blackmore, PhD.

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